Catalogue of American Amphibians and Reptiles.

Reynolds, R.G. 2012. *Epicrates chrysogaster*.

Epicrates chrysogaster (Cope)
Southern Bahamas Boa

Homalochilus chrysogaster Cope [1869] 1870:557. Type-locality, "Turk's Island." Holotype, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (ANSP) 10322, adult, sex unknown, collected by Adrian J. Ebell. Specimen is lost.
Epicrates chrysogaster: Stejneger 1904:694.

• **CONTENT**. Three subspecies are currently recognized: *E. c. chrysogaster, E. c. relicquus*, and *E. c. schwartzi*.

• **DEFINITION**. This is a medium-sized member of the genus *Epicrates*. Males reach 900 mm SVL and females reach 1540 mm SVL (Reynolds et al. 2011a). Neonates average 297 mm SVL and 6–8 g, with an estimated growth rate of 20 mm per month for the first year or two (Reynolds and Deal 2010). The body is slender in all but large females, which are much more robust. The tail is slender and tapers to a small tip, which is sometimes missing or damaged in individuals from wild populations. Average head width for adult individuals from Big Ambergris Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands, is 15.8 ± 4.1 mm (N = 81, range 9.2–30.0 mm) in females and 14.0 ± 1.7 mm (N = 133, range 9.2– 20.4 mm) in males. Average head length is 25.8 ± 5.3 mm (N = 65, range 15.5–44.2 mm) for females and 23.8 ± 2.3 mm (N = 122, range 17.4–32.1 mm) for males.

Juvenile coloration is orange to reddish with darker gray dorsal markings (spots or stripes). In adults the dorsum is generally light to dark gray or brownish with some patterning present, although some adults retain the juvenile orange coloration. Dorsal patterning has been classified into 6 pattern categories: single row of spots or saddles (single); dorsolaterally paired spots (pair); 2 or 4 dorsolateral stripes (stripe); little to no pattern present on ≥ 2/3 of the body length (little); stripes interrupted by paired spots or areas with no pattern (broken stripe); mixture of single, double, and saddle spots (mixed). The venter is immaculate and cream-colored.

• **DIAGNOSIS**. *Epicrates chrysogaster* may be distinguished from its congeners by the following combination of characters: Adult SVL 520–1540 mm, 33–37 dorsal scale rows on neck, 39–47 midbody dorsal scale rows, ventral scales 245–275 in males and 274–295 in females, ventral scales plus subcaudal scales 320–363 in males and 327–372 in females, head scale formula 3–2–3. (Schwartz and Henderson 1991).

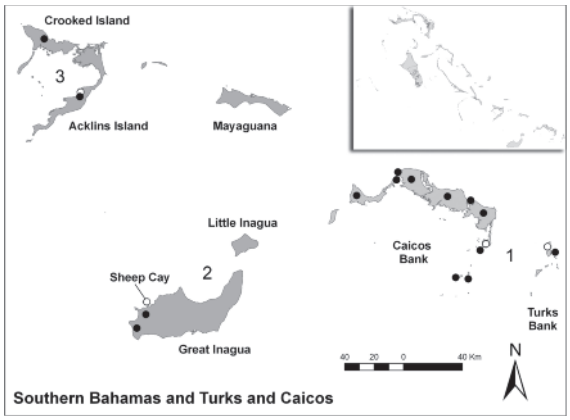
• **DESCRIPTIONS**. In addition to the descriptions by Cope (1871), Barbour and Shreve (1935), and Buden (1975), detailed descriptions are in Schwartz and Henderson (1991), Tolson and Henderson (1993), Henderson and Powell (2009), and Reynolds (2011b).

FIGURE 1. Adult *Epicrates c. chrysogaster,* spotted morph, from Big Ambergris Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands (photograph by the author).

FIGURE 2. Adult male *Epicrates c. chrysogaster*, striped morph, from Middle Caicos, Turks and Caicos Islands (photograph by the author).

FIGURE 3. Adult *Epicrates c. chrysogaster*, patternless morph, from Big Ambergris Cay, Turks and Caicos Islands (photograph by the author).

• **ILLUSTRATIONS**. Coburn (1991), Henderson and Powell (2007), Schwartz and Henderson (1985), Tolson and Henderson (1993), and Walls (1998) pro-



MAP. Distribution of *Epicrates chrysogaster*. Open circles represent the type-locality for each subspecies, closed circles represent other records. Note that it is unclear whether the type-locality for *E. c. chrysogaster* is from Grand Turk or South Caicos, as both were referred to as "Turk's Island" in the late 19th Century.

vided color photographs of striped and spotted morphs of *E. c. chrysogaster*. Additional photographs are in Buden (1975), Mehrtens (1987), Tolson (1987), Stoops and Wright (1993), Mattison (1995, 2007), Walls (1998, line drawings), Manco (2006), Niemiller (2008), Reynolds (2008, 2010a, b), Reynolds and Niemiller (2010a), Schmidt (2010), and Hedges (2012).

• **DISTRIBUTION**. *Epicrates chrysogaster* is restricted to the southern extent of the Bahamian Archipelago, on the Crooked-Acklins Islands, Great Inagua and Sheep Cay, and the following islands in the Turks and Caicos: Providenciales, Dellis Cay, North Caicos, East Caicos, Middle Caicos, Long Cay (Caicos Bank), Big and Little Ambergris Cays, Parrot Cay, Joe Grant's Cay, and Gibbs Cay on the Turks Bank. Rey-nolds (2011) speculated that the historical distribution likely included Grand Turk and South Caicos. This species was thought to have been extirpated from the Turks Bank but was rediscovered on Gibbs Cay by Reynolds and Niemiller (2010b). Range maps are in Buden (1975), Schwartz and Henderson (1991), Sheplan and Schwartz (1974), Tolson (1987), and Tolson and Henderson (1993).

FIGURE 4. Neonate *Epicrates c. chrysogaster,* spotted morph, from Providenciales, Turks and Caicos Islands (photograph by the author).

• **FOSSIL RECORD**. Subfossil remains have been found in middens on Middle Caicos and Grand Turk Islands (Newsom and Wing 2004).

• **PERTINENT LITERATURE**. References to *Epicrates chrysogaster* are arranged by topic: **biogeography** (Buden 1975; Nellis et al. 1983; O'Shea 2007; Reynolds 2011a,b; Reynolds et al. 2011b; Tolson 1987), **checklists and similar compendia** (Buckner et al. 2012; Edgar 2010; Hedges 2012; MacLean et al. 1977; Malnate 1971; McDiarmid et al. 1999; Procter and Fleming (1999; Reynolds 2008; Schwartz and Henderson 1985, 1988; Schwartz and Thomas 1975; Shattuck 1905; Stafford 1990; Stimson 1969; Stull 1935; Uetz and Hallermann 2012; Werner 1921; World Conservation Monitoring Centre 1993), **conservation** (Bahamas National Trust 1995; CITES 2011; Edgar 2010; Reynolds 2011a–b; Reynolds and Gerber, 2012; Reynolds et al. 2011b; Tolson and Henderson 1993, 2006), **ecology and natural history** (Buden 1975; Greene 1997; Henderson and Powell 2009; Mattison 1995, 2007; Reynolds 2008, 2011a,b; Reynolds and Deal 2010; Reynolds and Gerber, 2012; Reynolds and Niemiller 2011; Reynolds et al. 2011a–b; Tolson and Henderson 1993), **reproduction** (Buden 1975; Tolson 1980, 1994), **systematics and taxonomy** (Barbour 1914, 1916; Buden 1975; Burbrink 2005; Campbell 1997; Kluge 1989; Mertens 1939; Reynolds 2011a; Reynolds et al. 2011b; Rodríguez-Robles and Greene 1996; Schwartz 1968; Sheplan and Schwartz 1974; Stimson 1969; Stull 1935; Tolson 1987).

• **ETYMOLOGY**. The specific epithet *chrysogaster* is from the Greek CHRYSOS, "gold," and GASTER, "belly," referring to the light color of the venter of this species. The subspecific epithet *relicquus* is the misspelled Latin *reliquus*, "relic" or "surviving," probably referring to the fact that the holotype comes from a small satellite island of Great Inagua, where this spe-cies was incorrectly thought to have been extirpated (Barbour 1941). The subspecific epithet *schwartzi* honors Albert Schwartz, a prolific and cosmopolitan contributor to Caribbean herpetology (Buden 1975).

1. *Epicrates chrysogaster chrysogaster* Sheplan and Schwartz

Homalochilus chrysogaster Cope 1871:557. See species synonymy.
Epicrates chrysogaster: Stejneger 1904:694. See species synonymy.
Epicrates striatus chrysogaster: Stull 1935:390.
Epicrates chrysogaster chrysogaster: Sheplan and Schwartz 1974:91.

• **DEFINITION**. This subspecies is characterized by

the following combination of characters (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, N = 6): low number of ventral scales (245–259), low number of ventrals plus subcaudals (320–339), low number of dorsal scale rows at midbody (39–43), modally 14 supralabials with usually 3 supralabials entering the eye, modally 15 infralabials, and a pattern consisting of either a series of angulate to ovate dorsal blotches without a secondary lateral row, or a series of 4 longitudinal dark-gray stripes, the 2 dorsal stripes at about the level of the central portion of the position of the blotch series, and the lateral pair of stripes on the lower sides in about the position of a secondary series of lateral blotches.

2. *Epicrates chrysogaster relicquus* Sheplan and Schwartz

Epicrates relicquus Barbour and Shreve 1935:362. Type-locality, "Sheep Cay off the northwest coast of Great Inagua Island, Bahamas." Holotype, Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) R37891, adult male, collected by J.C. Greenway, Jr. on 27 February 1934 (not examined by author).

Epicrates striatus relicquus: Barbour 1937:150.

Epicrates chrysogaster relicquus: Sheplan and Schwartz 1974:93.

• **DEFINITION**. This subspecies is characterized by the following combination of characters (Sheplan and Schwartz 1974, N = 3): high number of ventral scales (269–275), high number of ventrals plus subcaudals (363 in 1 female), high number of dorsal scale rows at midbody (46–47), modally 14 supralabials with 2 entering the eye, modally 17 infralabials, dorsal pattern consisting of a series of angulate dorsal blotches which may be fused to each other or to the prominent ventrolateral series of secondary blotches that extend almost to the dorsal-ventral junction.

3. *Epicrates chrysogaster schwartzi* Buden

Epicrates chrysogaster schwartzi Buden 1975:173. Type-locality, "settlement of Delectable Bay, Acklins Island, Bahama Islands." Holotype, Louisiana State University Museum of Zoology (LSUMZ) 27500 (originally Albert Schwartz Field Series, ASFS, V27428), a subadult female, collected by D.W. Buden on 27 April 1972 (not examined by author).

• **DEFINITION**. This subspecies is characterized by the following combination of characters (Buden 1975, N = 3): a relatively large number of ventral and subcaudal scales (277 and 95, respectively, in 1 female), 3 preintersupraoculars, 1 loreal, 14 or 15 infralabials, 13 supralabials, 9 or 10 scales in circumorbital series, relatively few (36–38) midbody scale rows, body blotches that terminate close to the dorsoventral junction, and absence of a postocular stripe.

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